

MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER APRIL, 2007

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

So all right, I'm a little late. But.... better late than never. Anyway, we here at City Hall hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year. Let's hope 2007 ends up being as exciting as it has started out. I was complaining the other day that I didn't feel we were going anywhere but then I was reminded of what has happened since July, 2006. It's a lot and most of it is pretty exciting, but I'm a bit impatient. Nevertheless, there's a lot of "stuff" going on and I'm eager to tell you about it. So, pull up a chair, pop the top and enjoy.

SAFETY DEPARTMENT

Our Police Department continues to be a source of pride for our City. These ladies and gentlemen perform their duties with the utmost professionalism and have overcome obstacles that completely frustrate them as well as me. Can we talk?

You may have been reading about the shortage of jail space at the County. So how does that affect us in N.C.H.? Here's how. When we cite someone to Mayor's Court, it has been the policy for many, many years that any fine imposed upon the defendant, must be paid immediately or, just like Monopoly, he/she goes to jail without passing GO. It is a very efficient way of getting what is owed to the City from those who break the law. However, with no jail cells available, our magistrate sends them to jail for failure to pay the fine and by the time our officers get back from downtown, the lawbreaker has already been released because they have no space. Talk about frustrating. It gets worse. The financial result is clear. We spend more time and money chasing the person who now owes us money and has been let loose and who is very unlikely to return to our Court voluntarily. Also, it affects our court collections, which directly affects our ability to add more police and institute programs like STEP that allows us to put more cops on the street. In 2006, we took in over \$100,000 less in court fines than we did in 2005. Most of this being a direct result of no jail space. So you see, things that seem so disconnected are very much connected.

To try to combat this serious problem, we have contracted with Clinton County to provide us with jail space. It's a long drive but we MUST let people know that NCH stands for No Credit Here. I have requested that Council reinstate the STEP program immediately in order to get more police on the street and in the hope that we let the bad guys pay for it instead of our law abiding citizens.

A big THANKS to those persons involved in the Citizens on Patrol program. They do a great job, in both the business district as well as the neighborhoods. They are Jill Blank, Cheryl Deardorf, Jean Harp, Pat Hartzel, Joyce Huddleston, Clemy Lee, Carolyn Lindsley, Billie Gibson, Mathew O'Connor, Gerald Wallace and Terri Eilermann. If you know any of these people or see them walking the street (that doesn't sound right), say "Hi" and thanks.

Civil Service has been busy preparing a Civil Service test for new officers for the Fire Department. We hope to have that accomplished in April.

Our Fire Department has a long history of excellence and our current men and women who serve as Firefighters and EMT's continue that tradition. Just like our Police, despite obstacles that frustrate us at times, they continue to perform professionally and in a manner of which we all are proud. Next time you see one of our finest, why not say "Thanks!"?

I am sorry to report that Chief Michael Lotz and Assistant Chief Michael Lotz, Jr. will be leaving their positions. The Chief was the first Chief chosen by the Civil Service System, and has served our City for over 35 years as

firefighter, Assistant Fire Chief, and Chief. Michael Jr. is a career fire fighter for Cincinnati and in addition to being involved in N.C.H. he was with the 9-11 rescue team in New York. We all owe both a huge thanks for the years of service they have given to the City. Good-bye and good luck ... you will be missed.

PUBLIC WORKS

What can we say! Once again, our Fabulous Five turned our City into a winter wonderland and lit us up during the Christmas Season. We received numerous compliments from visitors who drove through NCH just to enjoy the view. At least for now.

Speaking of great jobs, it hasn't exactly been a quiet time for weather around here since the first of the year. Boy, are we paying for that nice December or what? Despite all the @#^\$* that was thrown our way, our guys kept our streets clear and in good shape. Nevertheless, we do have a problem. I get so accustomed to the great job our guys do, that when I leave our City limits, I'm slipping and sliding all over the place because I assume the streets are O.K. NOT! It doesn't come easy, though. Our guys will routinely go 24-36 hours without sleep in order to make our lives easier when it snows. They are a great bunch and deserve our thanks and respect!

We can make their job a little easier the next time it snows and decides to turn our city into an ice cube. Simply get your car off the street. Don't wait until we declare a snow emergency. You can't imagine how much quicker and better we can clear the streets of that white crud when there are no cars with which to play dodgem. Just so you know, when a snow emergency is declared, all vehicles **MUST** be off the snow emergency routes and **SHOULD** be removed from all other streets. The snow emergency routes are the main through streets such as Hamilton, Galbraith, Betts, Simpson, Savannah, Clovernook and La Boiteaux. We know it is easier said than done, but every effort should be made. But, it's not going to snow anymore, right? God, where is spring?

STREET'S AND HIGHWAYS

First and foremost, THANK YOU for passing the road and sewer levy once again. That was awesome and yet another sign that the huge majority of our citizens have pride in our City. The result will be the start of the Kleindale Avenue and the Catalpa Avenue reconstruction projects in 2007. Both, with a little luck and good weather should be complete in 2007. Also, the west side of Hamilton Avenue is scheduled to be paved this year. That project is not ours because Hamilton was torn up when new gas lines were put in last year. Remember those wonderful blockages last year? Anyway, this one is not on our dime. Our sidewalk program will make a return engagement this spring. We are going to start marking the walks that are in disrepair in the Southwest quadrant first. If your walks need repair, you may get them repaired yourself or be part of the group that will be fixed by a contractor hired by the City. This second option will likely be a little more expensive but the cost can be spread out a little on your real estate tax assessment. The choice will be yours.

TAX AND FINANCE

Ah, yes! Everybody's favorite subject. Paying taxes is about as much fun as sitting on a nail if you get my drift. However, unless everyone pays their fair share, the increased burden falls on those who obey the law. So, it is the intent of our Tax Department to assure that everyone who has an obligation to pay does so. Sometimes that becomes a challenge the result of which is Mayor's Court. NO ONE and I mean no one wants to spend time and energy taking someone to court for failure to file and/or pay taxes. That whole process is an even bigger nail. But, we will do what we have to do to be equitable for all of our citizens.

So, where do we spend the money? Well you may find it surprising that over 60% of the total income in the City is spent for Public Safety. That means we only have 40% left for things like Recreation, Public Works, Utilities, Code Enforcement, Capital Improvements, Economic Development, and General Government Salaries. So you see, it is important we succeed in our Economic Development Program. More on that later.

RECREATION

Attached to this Newsletter is the 2007 schedule of events for our Recreation Department. You may want to keep this handy because I have the feeling we're going to have a busy year. The Commission is putting together a short and long term plan for facilities and programs. As you may know, it has been our desire for a long time to have a major event once a month. We all feel it is an important element within a city that it's citizens have an opportunity to get to know each other in a relaxed and social setting. I'm very eager to see the plans for these programs.

I know it is colder than you know what and the last thing you want to think about is getting wet but, spring is coming. Well, it better be! So, this year check out the pool. For our new citizens, you just moved into a City with a first class pool and it is really inexpensive to join. It is the best deal in town. For that matter, it is the best deal in the County. Membership fees are as follows:

		Resident Prices	Non-resident prices
Student (6-17)	Season Pass	\$30.00	\$55.00
Adult (18-54)	Season Pass	\$40.00	\$60.00
Senior (55+)	Season Pass	\$25.00	\$30.00
Family (4 members)	Season Pass	\$100.00	\$125.00
*each add'l member		\$10.00	\$10.00
Swim Lessons	2-Week Session * Free w/season pass	\$15.00 *	\$25.00 *

Look for two new special events this year. On May 5th, Recreation will sponsor the city wide "Garage Sale", and on July 7th, there will be a "Cruise-in" at Fricker's. For details, call Rene Stiles at City Hall at 513-521-7413.

I have recommended to Council that we dedicate the Pool to the Ashing Family. Charles Ashing Sr. was very involved with North College Hill Recreation many years ago and was instrumental in building the pool. His son, a graduate of North College Hill High School and later Purdue University, went on to gain success at the General Electric Company and he and his wife, Deanna, also a former North College Hill resident, have not forgotten their roots and have been very generous to our school system and involved in the Alumni Association. I think it is important to be aware of our heritage and proud of those who have gone before us so that we can more confidently proceed into the future. Look for the plaque at the pool this summer.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We don't have any new restaurants in town nor do we have anyone to fill up the old Thriftway site and we have way too many empty storefronts. So, what has our new Economic Development Director been doing since July? We are glad to tell you.

Two years ago or better, it became quite obvious to anyone who was involved in the City and paying any attention, North College Hill had reached a critical position. The vacancies that you now see were inevitable and the fact that we were not attracting the kind of businesses we want made it clear we had to take drastic action. During this process, we all knew, as we have discussed in previous newsletters, the N.C.H. Renaissance is not going to happen over night. So, what have we done? With guidance from Linda Fitzgerald, our Economic Development Director, we have solidified a realistic and strong plan of action. In our last newsletter, we spoke of our Renaissance. To get there, we first completed a "nominal group technique" that assembled persons from every fabric of our City in order to, for the first time in our City's history; clearly identify a list of priorities as perceived by this representative group. Next, a steering committee was formed whose purpose is to ensure the priorities set forth in that original meeting are met. With the approval of Council, we hired a planning firm to assemble our first ever Strategic Land Use Plan. This document will graphically display not only what kind of uses we want in our

City in the future, but also where we want them to be. This is huge!!! Every developer we have spoken to has said they are interested in N.C.H. but will only come in after we have a real plan in place. We will have this by the fall of 2007.

At the same time, we reorganized the Community Improvement Corporation and brought in some very influential and talented people from the Hamilton County area.

While we recognize the importance of business, we all know that our neighborhoods must, not merely be stabilized, but improved and the blighted rental housing will be greatly reduced. To that end, again, thanks to Linda Fitzgerald, we negotiated with Cincinnati Housing Partnership and have entered into an agreement with them to redevelop some currently undesirable properties. This is just the beginning of a large presence that you will notice this summer. Also, a program of visiting businesses has been started so that we at City Hall understand the concerns of our business owners.

From the Administrative end, I have been in several meetings with Commissioner David Pepper regarding potential programs that can be coordinated between first ring communities like us and the County. This can have large benefits for us if only in making the Commissioners aware of the fact that their actions have direct effect on us. Need I mention Section 8 housing?

So, all of this has taken place in the last six months. While we are pleased with *this progress*, we *know* it is only the beginning and we've got a long way to go. But, we will get there and do it in style.

WELCOME ...

to two new businesses in town. Legacy Psychological Services at 7105 Hamilton Avenue and St. Raphael's religious article store on Galbraith Road across from the Junior High. Good luck to you both.

Four businesses in our City that deserve to be recognized for their longevity and service to our City are North College Hill Bakery, Buddy Rogers Music, Clovernook Country Club and Clovernook Center. Each of these four has been in our City for 50 years or more.

As a new feature in future Newsletters, we will be spotlighting significant and/or unique businesses within our City. Look for more on this in upcoming issues.

CHARTER

Again, thanks to those voters who voted to allow the formation of the Charter Commission to explore the writing of a charter for our City. To date, the Commission has met several times and has learned that the task is huge. The members have been great to work with and I think we all have learned a lot already. The Commission has spoken with two different mayors from cities that have charters and to Mr. John Gotherman from the Ohio Municipal League. While most of us never heard of John, he just happens to be the guy who wrote the laws that dictate many of the rules for forming charters in the State of Ohio. He's so smart; frankly, I didn't understand some of the stuff he was saying. Thankfully, he was patient with us and answered all of our questions. But, just like Uncle Sam, the Commission NEEDS YOU! Public meetings will be held in the next few months to gather resident input. The Commission meets every other Saturday morning at City Hall from 9:00A.M. - 11:00 A.M. These are open meetings and the public is encouraged to come and listen. The dates of the future Commission meetings are March 31, April 14, and April 28 and so on every other Saturday. Seriously, I took four years of government and history at Miami University and never learned as much as I am on these Saturdays. Please attend and learn about our City and the way it works

BITS AND PIECES

- We're still working on the Community Room to be located next to the Administrative offices. Boy Scout Troop 393 has adopted this for their Eagle Scout project so that will help this become reality. Look for completion later this year
- Your Mayor has been named to serve on the newly formed Criminal Justice Commission. It is an exciting opportunity to help N.C. H. and the entire community around us in developing ways to make our society safer.
- There have been monthly meetings occurring between members of City Administration, City Council, School Administration and School Board in an attempt to help analyze challenges facing the school and City and find ways to improve both City and Schools. It has been an interesting journey. I know I've been very impressed with the representatives of the student leadership team that has been formed. Items that have been discussed include civic pride, litter, student conduct in and out of school and recreational alternatives as well as increased parental involvement. We're making progress one step at a time.
- Speaking of our schools, remember last year when everyone said that the only reason we were winning was because of O.J. and Bill. Take another look! I love to tell those people "I told you so". **Our Trojans boys basketball TEAM has won the Ohio Division III Championship for the third year in a row. This team is made up of great kids with a great coaching staff. We should all be proud of the team and our school. All our students deserve our support as much as possible whether it is on the field or in the classroom.**
- SPECIAL THANKS go to Schott Monument for donating the stone monument for the basketball team, which will be displayed at City Hall.
- A reminder spring is coming and that means the grass is going to start growing which means it needs to be cut more than once a year. By now, you know we have a property maintenance code and we enforce it. So, be a good neighbor and keep your property in good shape.
- On that same subject, a new partnership has been formed with the Cincinnati Housing Partners. We are very excited about this because the program includes buying foreclosed or problem properties and renovating or tearing them down and building new. They have already bought a property on Bake and will demolish the existing house and build a new structure. The really good news is, there will be no rental properties allowed. The homes being developed by this group is for home ownership only. This is a big step in returning our neighborhoods to HOME OWNERS!
- The Concerned Citizens Group meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 P.M. at the N.C.H. Senior Center.
- Thanks and good luck to Chris Schadel who left for another position. As you may remember, Chris served as our Administrative Assistant and did a great job. Welcome to Pete Tunnat who has been on the job since February. We're glad to have him so stop by and say hi!
- We're still looking for a space for the N.C.H. Hall of Fame. If you have any suggestions, please let us know.
- Don't forget Hamilton County's Home Improvement Program is available for residential and commercial properties with a value up to \$350,000. This is a great way to fix up your business or house with low cost money. For more information, call Pat Hanrahan at 946-8234.
- Congratulations to Chip Emmenrich whose Burnet Ridge Winery received great coverage in the Enquirer on March 13th. "So, what?", you say. Well, did you know that the winery is in North College Hill? And, did you know that the wine has won so many awards, he doesn't even enter the competition any longer. Now, the good part. His wine was chosen to be served to President Clinton at a dinner in 1996. And, guess what's on the label? "Made in North college Hill, Ohio" Thanks, Chip for a great success.
- Speaking of nationally known business, you can imagine my surprise when, in a grocery store in South Carolina, I saw a rack of Old World Pita Breads. Yep, that's right, our own "Old World Bakery". What a great thing for our city.

Well, that's it for this time. We really have a lot going on and there's even more that is in the works but we really can't talk about yet. We're starting to see things come to fruition now but we have a long way to go. Remember, you are the best ambassador for our City so talk us up wherever you go and spread the good news about our Renaissance. As always, our most important product is our people and I happen to think we have the best. Thanks for allowing me the privilege to be your Mayor. See you next time

Just a Thought... "The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta' put up with the rain" *Dolly Parton*

